

# Source

A Newsletter for the Patients, Volunteers & Staff of the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and clinic

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## Volunteer Caregivers at VA SORCC

By Annelisc Weston



(back row) Annelisc Weston, Caregiver Volunteers Charlotte Seaman, and Roger Seam (front row) Blanche Douma and Sherry Jasper. (Volunteers not pictured are Kevin George – Driver, Dodie Picanso and Rhonda Brustol)

A new volunteer program is taking shape at the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center & Clinics (SORCC) in White City, Oregon; it's called the Caregiver Support Network. This program is designed to enhance the lives of older, homebound veterans.

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The VA SORCC, welcomes submission of articles of interest to our readers. The editor reserves the right to use and edit all contributed articles. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Administrative Boards, Editorial Staff, or Department of Veterans Affairs.

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## *A Message from the*

## *Director*

**Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of VA SORCC:**

Retired U.S. Army General Eric K. Shinseki was nominated by President Barack Obama on December 7, 2008 to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. His nomination was confirmed by the Senate on January 20, 2009, and he was sworn in as the seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs on January 21, 2009.

Secretary Shinseki served as Chief of Staff, United States Army, from 1999 to June 11, 2003, and retired from active duty on August 1,

2003. During his tenure, he initiated the Army Transformation Campaign to address both the emerging strategic challenges of the early 21st century and the need for cultural and technological change in the United States Army.

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, he led the Army during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and integrated the pursuit of the Global War on Terrorism with Army Transformation, successfully enabling the Army to continue to transform while at war.

Prior to becoming the Army's Chief of Staff, Secretary Shinseki served as the Vice Chief of Staff from 1998 to 1999. He previously served simultaneously as Commanding General, United States Army, Europe and Seventh Army; Commanding General, NATO Land Forces, Central Europe, both headquartered in Heidelberg, Germany; and Commander of the NATO-led Stabilization Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina, headquartered in Sarajevo.

He was commissioned a second lieutenant of Artillery upon graduation from the United States Military Academy in June 1965 and was attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division as a forward observer from December 1965 to September 1966, when he was wounded in combat in the Republic of Vietnam. He returned to Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii to recuperate and subsequently was assigned as Assistant Secretary, then Secretary to



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the General Staff, U.S. Army, Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, from 1967-1968. He transferred to Armor Branch and attended the Armor Officer Advanced Course at Fort Knox, Kentucky, before returning to Vietnam a second time in 1969. While serving as Commander, Troop A, 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment, he was wounded a second time in 1970.

Other assignments include Commander, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 3rd Infantry Division; Commander, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division; Deputy Chief of Staff, Support for Allied Land Forces Southern Europe; Assistant Division Commander-Maneuver, 3rd Infantry Division; Commander, 1st Cavalry Division, as well as G-3, 3rd Infantry Division, 1984-1985; G-3, VII US Corps, 1989-1990; and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1996-1997.

Shinseki holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a Master of Arts degree from Duke University, and is a graduate of the National War College. Secretary Shinseki was awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Clusters), Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Purple Heart (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Air Medal, Parachutist Badge, Ranger Tab, Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge, and the Army Staff Identification Badge. He currently lives in Falls Church, Virginia, with his wife Patty.



# American Red Cross

The following dates from **10 am to 4 pm** are when the American Red Cross blood drives are scheduled in the theater at the VA SORCC

**February 26, 2009**  
**April 30, 2009**  
**June 25, 2009**  
**August 27, 2009**  
**October 22, 2009**

**Give Blood and Change a Life, Starting with your own!**



Hearing the call to assist with the growing aging veteran population, dynamic volunteers from all walks of life have begun volunteering as caregivers in a variety of creative and innovative ways, including a certified driver who transports non-ambulatory veterans, a cookie baker extraordinaire, a clever dominos player, a party organizer, and others who are matched up with veterans seeking a friendly visit.

Volunteers are a precious resource. As the VA SORCC begins expanding outreach services to veterans in the community, programs like Home Based Primary Care, Homemaker Home Health Aid Program, and the Adult Day Health Care Program will continue to benefit from their involvement.

If you know someone interested in sharing their time, talent and compassion with older veterans, call Annelise Weston in the Social Work Community Care Department (541-826-2111 x3317) or James Cunningham in Voluntary Services (541-830-7467).

**On February 25, 2008 we'll be celebrating and recognizing our dedicated VA SORCC Volunteers at the annual Volunteer Awards Banquet. This year's theme is: VA Volunteers Make Wishes & Dreams Come True.**

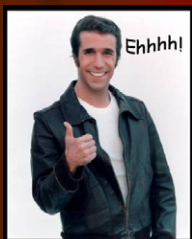


## VAVS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February '09	16 <sup>th</sup>	President's Day – CRD Office closed
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Volunteer Awards Ceremony – Red Lion
March '09	17 <sup>th</sup>	St. Patrick's Day
April '09	TBD	Youth Volunteer Recognition Party (tentative)
	27 <sup>th</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	National Volunteer Week

**NOTE: This is not an all-inclusive list. It is a general guideline to recurring events!**





# SYSTEMS REDESIGN

Systems Redesign provides a team approach for VA staff to plan, redesign, map, measure and integrate processes and systems to deliver real-time improvements in VA Health Care systems.

Improving our work will improve our service to our customers, fellow employees and most importantly our Veterans.

## Five-Step Structured Approach:

1. Team: *Assemble the team*
2. Aim: *Set a measurable goal*
3. Map: *Flow chart the current process*
4. Measure: *Establish measures of success*
5. Change: *Implement and monitor changes*



## Currently we have teams redesigning:

- Incentive Therapy Program
- Residential Programs
- Comp & Pen
- Primary & Specialty Care Access
- Quality Performance Measures
- Exam Rooms
- Human Resource Recruitment Process

"For every nine people who denounce innovation, only one will encourage it. For every nine people who do things the way they have always been done, only one will wonder if there is a better way. For every nine people who stand in line in front of a locked building, only one will ever come around and check the back door. Our progress as a species rests squarely on the shoulders of that tenth person." -Za Rinpoche and Ashley Nebelsieck

For more information, call the Systems Redesign Office: Sherri Masterson, ext. 7407



## NFS Staff Receive Awards



Congratulations to forty-three (all not shown) Nutrition and Food Service (NFS) staff members for receiving Excellent Safety Record Certificates for Calendar Year 2008! NFS Environment of Care Inspections continues to reflect excellent ratings.

Congratulations! To Teresa Baehr and Scott Rutter, NFS Food Service Workers (not shown) for receiving recognition for their perfect attendance for Calendar Year 2008. Nice job NFS, keep up the good work!

# OEF-OIF Veterans

**“Our Turn to Serve You”**

**The VA's OEF-OIF Program provides exclusive personal service to veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other “hostile fire” areas.**



**Chris J. Petrone, LCSW**  
**OEF-OIF Program Manager**  
541-826-2111 x3230  
541-531-3274 (cell)



**Billy Haden, MSW**  
**OEF-OIF Case Manager**  
541-826-2111 x3798  
541-261-7843 (cell)



**Cynthia Houston**  
**Transition Patient Advocate**  
541-440-1000 x140175  
541-285-3819 (cell)

**Please call one of the individuals above to learn more about the OEF-OIF Program and the benefits & services available to you through the Department of Veterans Affairs**



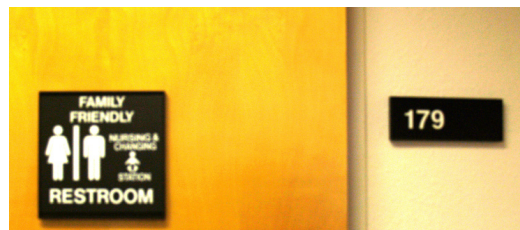
**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Southern Oregon Rehabilitation**  
**Center & Clinics**



Brenda Davis, LCSW, is our new Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Brenda is an experienced clinician who served as suicide prevention coordinator at Pelican Bay State Prison for seven years and most recently has been the agency director for Del Norte County mental health programs.

## Family Friendly Restroom at VA SORCC

There is now a family friendly restroom with a nursing and baby changing station in B211 South, Room 179. The room is large enough to accommodate a family with stroller, several children etc. In addition, it is large enough to accommodate a family/couple in which one member is in a wheelchair. Thanks Randy Jameson for setting this up.



## Wolfgang Agotta, Patient Advocate Gail German-Rightnour, Patient Representative

Can help you with: Compliments, complaints or unmet needs. If you have SORCC policies and procedure questions not answered elsewhere, come see us we have an open door policy. Our hours are:

6:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Monday—Thursday  
Building 201, Room 272 and  
Ext. 3657 (Wolfgang)  
Ext. 7504 (Gail)





## Day Treatment Program Receives Wii

VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center & Clinics (SORCC) is a thankful recipient of a new Nintendo Wii system with additional games, donated by the National Military Order of the Purple Heart. The game system is set up for use by veterans involved in the facility's Day Treatment Program (DTP).

“One function of the DTP is to provide daily activities to promote psychological health and social growth,” says Tonia Allenger, Recreation Therapist. “Use of the Wii system encourages friendly competition and social interaction, and even though it encourages physical movement, the exercise it provides is not perceived as “work”. We are very grateful to the members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart for this recreational and therapeutic system.”



Tonia Allenger prepares to “Tee Off” while demonstrating use of the Wii to veterans in the Day Treatment Program.

## Information Protection Awareness Tip

**Web Page Privacy Policies and Personal Information:** Always read a Web site's privacy policy before entering personal information on the page. The privacy policy informs you about the identifying data that the site collects, how the information is used, and any rights that the site maintains for sharing your information. This statement is usually located at the bottom of the Web site.

Any site that asks for personal information, like your name, address or date of birth, should have a privacy policy statement. This includes your internet service provider. If an internet or intranet site does not have a privacy policy readily accessible online, you should contact the site administrator before providing personal information to find out how the data you provide is collected and managed.

For information on how the VA handles personal information that users provide through VA Web pages and online forms, visit the VA Web Page Privacy Policy: [www.va.gov/privacy/](http://www.va.gov/privacy/)

Bernice Reber, CSP  
Information Protection & Risk Management, Facility ISO



## Is Your Attitude Worth Catching Today?

If you've tried to resolve a problem with your auto insurance company recently, I hope you haven't had to deal with a voice mail system or a call center in India. America seems to have forgotten what good customer service sounds, looks, and feels like.

In the last quarter of FY 2008, SORCC scored in the "red" for the performance measure of Overall Outpatient Satisfaction on the VHA's Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP). Seventy-four percent of Veterans using SORCC outpatient services rated their overall satisfaction as very good or excellent. The VHA benchmark for this measure is 77%.

In our effort to improve Customer Service at SORCC, we brought Mr. Pat Francisco, Master Trainer for the C.A.R.E. program, to White City in early December. Mr. Francisco is an active Colonel in the Air Force Reserves and a Quality and Performance consultant from Portland VAMC. In addition to certifying seven CARE instructors, Pat helped train more than sixty staff members in the CARE philosophy.

CARE, an acronym for Connecting, Appreciating, Responding, and Empowering our Veteran patients, is about delivering impressive Customer Service. CARE is based on an attitude of "I care" and the belief that communicating with patients is different. Delivering healthcare is not the same as talking to a person who's paying their telephone bill or buying car insurance.

A seemingly simple conversation with the patient can help the patient feel welcome, decrease anxiety and inspire confidence. Done badly, the conversation can make the patient feel like a burden and add to their worry. Research has shown that patients assume healthcare staff are competent — good at "curing" — and judge their experience by the "caring" they feel. CAREing from the front-line, administrative staff is as important as the curing from the clinical staff. From the patient's perspective, caring is part of curing.

We will be doing more CARE trainings throughout the year as we try to deliver impressive customer service to our Veterans and their families.

Mark Gibbons MS, Outcomes  
Customer Service Committee, Team Leader



## Frequently asked employee questions about the 2008 W-2

### **Q. Why don't my earnings for 2008 match my annual salary?**

A. The hourly rate of pay is computed by taking the annual salary and dividing by 2087 for non Title 38 employees or by 2080 for Title 38 employees. The system multiplies the hourly rate by the number of hours worked to obtain the biweekly amount of pay. Some tax years have 27 pay periods included on the W-2. In that year, the W-2 has more than the annual salary. In the years that only have 26 pay periods, the amount on the W-2 is less than the annual salary. Also, pre-tax items like health benefits, HSA, FSA, and Fedvip reduce the Federal wage.

### **Q. What does V in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. V stands for non-taxable health benefits. The amount equals the employee share of health benefits for the tax year.

### **Q. What does Y in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. Y stands for Health Care Flexible Spending and Dependent Care Flexible Spending. The amount equals the Health Care FSA and Dependent Care FSA deducted from your check for the tax year.

### **Q. What does K in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. K stands for Fedvip. The amount equals the Fedvip Dental and Vision premiums deducted from your check for the tax year.

### **Q. What does P in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. P stands for Employer Provided Vehicle (EPV). EPV is the dollar amount reported to the IRS for the use of government vehicles to and from your residence and work.

### **Q. What does C in box 14 of my W-2 mean?**

A. C stands for Moving Expense Reimbursements. The amount equals the taxable moving expenses received for the tax year. It should equal the taxable amounts on your travel recaps for the same period of time.

### **Q. What does S in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. S stands for Puerto Rico Health benefits. This applies only to employees who were at station 672 or 355 during 2008. The amount equals the employee share health benefits for the tax year even if you do not participate in pre-tax health.

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**Q. What does T in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. T stands for Puerto Rico Cola. This applies only to employees who were at station 672 or 355 during 2008. The amount equals the total Cola received for the tax year.

**Q. What does R in box 14 on my W-2 mean?**

A. R stands for Puerto Rico Retirement. This applies only to employees who were at station 672 or 355 during 2008. The amount equals the employee share of retirement for the tax year.

**Q. What is the amount in box 10 on my W-2?**

A. The amount in box 10 on the W-2 is a combination of DCFSA (Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account) (deducted from your check and listed on your E&L as Dependent Care FSA) and Child Care Subsidy paid by the VA to your child care provider on your behalf. If you did not participate in the Child Care Subsidy program, the amount in box 10 is equal to the amount deducted from your check for Dependent Care FSA. If the amount in box 10 is larger than \$5,000.00, the amount over \$5,000 is taxed and included in box 1.

**Q. What does D in box 12 on my W-2 mean?**

A. D stands for elective deferrals to TSP/401K. The amount equals the employee amount of TSP for the tax year.

**Q. What does a year, for example 2006 in box 12 of my W-2 mean?**

A. A year in box 12 stands for make-up TSP contributions for a prior year.

**Q. What does P in box 12 on my W-2 mean?**

A. P stands for excludable moving expenses. The amount is not included in box 1, 3, or 5.

**Q. What does W in box 12 on my W-2 mean?**

A. W stands for the amount of Health Saving Account money deducted from your check for the tax year.

**Q. Why doesn't the difference between my Federal wage and my Medicare wage include my pre-tax health, flexible spending, Fedvip and HSA?**

A. Because pre-tax health, flexible spending, Fedvip, and HSA are not subject to OASDI and Medicare tax. Money withheld for pre-tax health; FSA, Fedvip, and HSA is not reported to Federal, State (unless you live in New Jersey or Puerto Rico), OASDI and Medicare wages. OASDI and Medicare tax is withheld on TSP.





# WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Heart disease is the #1 killer of  
**women veterans**



**take heart**

Call your VA  
provider today.



★ *You served, you deserve the best care anywhere.* ★

Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, MDC 000000

# WHAT WOMEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEART DISEASE AND HEART ATTACKS

## Are women at risk?

**Yes.** Heart disease is the **leading cause of death** among women over 65. Heart disease kills 1 in every 4 women, while 1 in 30 dies of breast cancer.

## What do women need to know about heart disease and heart attacks?

Women are less likely to survive heart attacks than men.

Warning signs of a heart attack include:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in one or both arms, neck, jaw, back, or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, lightheadedness, breaking out in a cold sweat

Women may also have more vague signs than men such as:

- Unusual tiredness
- Anxiety (feeling uneasy or worried)
- Trouble sleeping
- Indigestion (upset stomach)
- Problems breathing



## What can women do to protect themselves?

Risk factors are conditions that make a person more likely to develop a disease. You can't change some risk factors, such as family history (heredity) and age. You **can** change other important risk factors for heart disease:

Lifestyle changes:

- Stop smoking
- Increase physical activity
- Lose weight if overweight

Control these if you have them:

- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes

## Should post-menopausal women use hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to reduce heart disease risk?

**No.** HRT **can** be used for short periods of time to minimize the symptoms of menopause (such as hot flashes) but should not be used long-term for prevention. Talk with your health care provider about your specific questions and concerns.

**If you think you or someone else is having a heart attack, get help immediately! Call 911!**

VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention  
Office of Patient Care Services  
February 2009  
[www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov)



## Success Story: Fred Robinson

### By Patient Council

If you had to describe Health Service Assistant Fred Robinson, what word would you use? “Kind”, “gentle”, “intelligent”, “friendly”, “caring” humble” and “hard working”. These are some of the responses by residents of the VA SORCC to this question.

When talking with residents and staff alike a common theme appears; Fred, seems to be everywhere he is needed and always just at the right time. That seems to be one of the qualities that people find endearing about Fred. I heard many stories told by SORCC residents about how “bummed-out” they were until they “ran into Fred” and “he cheered me up with words of encouragement and compassion.”

I tried to sit down with Fred to discover the man who is clearly admired and respected by so many people here at the VA SORCC. However, Fred is always on the go helping people, so I went with him, asking him questions along the way and watching him effortlessly interact with compassion and respect with residents.

Fred is a retiree of the United States Air Force. He describes his military time as “a great experience,” one which he “never regretted.” After serving his country with honor, Fred found himself divorced, using drugs and morally adrift. “I became a person of dubious character and I belonged to a culture where sex, drugs and rock and roll were glamorous,” said Fred. Fred says, “After some years of living in turmoil I chose to be homeless, because it was easy.” The pain and strain his life, during that time, was “against all the principals that my mom taught me and that at the core of me I believed in.” said Fred.

Fred spoke matter-of-factly when speaking of his painful past. But never allowing the conversation or an antidote, concerning his past drug usage, to end on a note of despair Fred quickly added that he became fed-up with the vicious cycle of pain that addiction and the drug culture had to offer so when a friend told him about the SORCC he decided to seek the help he needed so he could again be, a useful citizen.

Being a “useful citizen” is far more than just a theme in Fred’s life. Listening to the praise of residents and staff of the VA SORCC it becomes clear that this is a man who wants to help. When I asked him what he wants for his future, without missing a beat and without stopping to think about how he would answer, he quickly and with a resolve which one could only admire he said, “I want to do more to help the veterans live a productive life.” His desire to be “useful” is typified by his obvious concern and respect for the residents and amplified in his stated hopes for his future; “I want to be able to influence others through my actions and deeds... I want to be a positive example for the veterans.”

When I asked how he will accomplish those things, a sense of peace emanated from him. He warmly smile and time seemed to momentarily stand still for him as though he was basking in the warmth of a memory where all the goodness that he has ever known was present and he said, “I pray to be a better man. The kind of man my mother wanted me to be and taught me to be. I strive to be a beneficial member of society, to be a useful citizen.”

The phrase “useful citizen”, fits the man I spent hours with on a cool and crisp Saturday afternoon. Every subject raised would return to one of several themes of sobriety, respect, service to others, the honoring of both co-workers (who he freely admits helped and is helping him in his journey), and the veterans he works for.

Fred Robinson, Air Force retiree, Health Service Assist (HAS) of the Residential Care Program, former resident of the SORCC, useful citizen and this month’s feature “Success Story.”



Fred Robinson, HSA



# Who Cares?

*About Quality Health Care.*



*Dawn McElhany does. Dawn loves the outdoors, especially fishing. When she's not on a river or lake casting a rod and reel, she's fishing on land. Fishing for better ways to improve services to veterans, that is. "My husband and I are both veterans. I understand what many vets have been through," she says. "I feel it is both an honor and a privilege to offer my services as a Nurse Practitioner to those who have put their lives on the line to defend our way of life."*

Klamath Falls VA Employees. Dedicated to Your Care.  
Every Day.